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SUBJECT: JORDAN: HUMAN RIGHTS STRATEGY IN 2003/4

REF: 03 STATE 333935

¶1. Post is providing the following report on actions taken by the USG in Jordan during 2003 and January 2004. This information is keyed to the requirements of reftel para 6.

¶2. Begin text:

A) Jordan has a history of restrictions on freedom of speech, press, assembly, and association, a weak judiciary, and security services that sometimes act with impunity, all of which contribute to human rights abuses. However, June 2003 parliamentary and July 2003 municipal elections were generally considered free and fair. The King specifically charged the new government appointed in October with promoting political development and human rights; there was an increase in public debate on major policy issues by year's end. The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Jordan capitalizes on these developments and addresses a wide range of relevant issues including the rule of law and legal reforms, the growth of civil society and participation in democratic institutions, and improved education. The United States promotes human rights and democracy through direct dialogue with the Jordanian government at all levels, programs and training that foster particular elements of human rights, and by reporting on human rights, labor and religious freedom. The U.S. Agency for International Development's program (\$250 million in 2003), though beneficial to all Jordanians, is especially structured to assist women and the sometimes marginalized poor and rural populations.

B) not applicable

C) During 2003, the Government formed the quasi-independent National Center for Human Rights, and the Embassy has arranged in-kind donations to its new library. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also formed the Human Rights Directorate last year, with which the Embassy has developed a highly cooperative relationship. Over half of all professional military education provided in the U.S. to Jordanian personnel each year includes a human rights component.

The Embassy has been directly involved in promoting the rule of law and legal reform. 12 Shari'a Law faculty members participated in an International Visitor (IV) Program on religious tolerance and 12 more are traveling this month. Several returned IV participants enrolled in the USG English Language Program, and plan to pursue higher studies in the U.S. During the year, 15 judges participated in 10-day mediation and case management workshops in the U.S. that included visits to different courts in California (see addendum). The Embassy continues to work closely with the Ministry of Justice to extend case management, mediation, and, potentially, criminal justice reforms.

The Public Affairs section conducted three workshops for journalists on press freedom and responsibility and election coverage. Through PASA funding and MEPI support, the NGO Arab Civitas also introduced civic education activities in 21 pilot government schools. 52 Jordanian public and private schools are now linked to American counterparts with whom they discuss human rights issues. In September, 20 students participated in a civic awareness and student leadership program in several cities throughout the U.S. (see addendum).

In December, the Embassy hosted a delegation from the American Council of Young Political Leaders to interact with civic-minded Jordanian youth and professionals. The Public Affairs section is currently funding and producing Arabic translations of the Foundations of Democracy book series.

C and D) This year about 60 female candidates for the Jordanian parliamentary elections received individual counseling and training on campaign techniques and public relations through PA-sponsored workshops. The Embassy also funded a campaign phone center for one month prior to the elections. The six women elected have formed a support network with some of the unsuccessful female activists, and they continue to receive training through Mission-funded orientation programs on Parliamentary procedures and human-rights-related issues.

E) The Embassy tracked and reported on religious freedom cases, and State Department officials in the Embassy and in Washington have discussed individual cases with the Government of Jordan at the highest levels.

F) The U.S. maintains dialogue with key actors in the labor sector, including union leaders, International Labor Organization officials, industrial park managers, factory owners, and government representatives. As in the past, we placed special focus was on the Qualified Industrial Zones, which have special export privileges to the U.S., and where labor conditions have remained better than average. The Embassy also arranged for three union leaders to travel to the U.S. in January on a Citizen Exchange Program that familiarized them with the American labor movement and provided them with an opportunity to network. Embassy representatives discussed with government officials implementation of Jordan's international commitments to fight child labor and trafficking.

13. Addendum (programs valued at over \$100,000):

Civic Awareness and Student Leadership Program (\$184,186): Two-week visit to the U.S. in September 2003 by 20 students, organized by the Academy for Educational Development. Program introduced Jordanian youth to American culture and government, helping improve their understanding of the culture, society and values. Included visits to New York, Denver, Washington, DC and Rochester, NY in an effort to show a comprehensive and diversified picture of the U.S.

Mediation and Case Management Workshop (\$138,628): Twelve-day program in the U.S. (October 2003) for 15 Jordanian judges, organized by the Institute for the Study and Development of Legal Systems. Introduced participants to state and federal alternative dispute resolution coordination, mediation observation, and case management. Included visits to San Francisco and San Diego.

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